

**Nicholas Solis** [he/him]

**Nicholas Solis will be accepting applications for:** PB fiction. I would like to share my experiences with POC authors.



**Bio:** Nicholas Solis is an award-winning elementary educator, as well as a writing teacher at The Writing Barn in Austin, Texas. In 2018, he was the recipient of the Walter Dean Myers Grant from We Need Diverse Books. He has taught students all over the globe—from Tanzania to Texas—and there’s one thing he’s learned from his world travels: kids are kids everywhere you go. Nick is a prolific author who writes picture books, teaching blogs, middle grade novels, and poetry. His debut author/illustrator book, *THE STARING CONTEST*, released with Peter Pauper Press in September 2020 and was nominated as a Redbud Read Aloud Award finalist for 2022. *THE COLOR COLLECTOR*, with Sleeping Bear Press, came out April 15th, 2021 and *MY TOWN, MI PUEBLO*, with Nancy Paulsen Books, will be released August 16th, 2022. He lives with his wife, their dog, and their son, Leo, in Austin, Texas.

Learn more about Nick at [nicholassolis.com](http://nicholassolis.com).

**1. You have two minutes to give a speech on anything! What would your topic be?**

Kindness and how the power of simple gestures can significantly change the course of one’s life.

**2. If you could live in any film, tv, or book universe, what would it be?**

If I could live in any film it would be *A Good Year*. A man inherits a simple vineyard from his uncle who lives in the south of France. The setting is magical and I would love to drink wine and write all day long and then go into the village for terrific food and black and white movies.

**3. What are your five favorite picture books not written, illustrated, and/or edited by you?**

1. My absolute favorite, and the one that inspired me to write *The Staring Contest*, is *A Book with No Pictures* by BJ Novak. I thought the premise was genius and something I’d never seen before.
2. *Press Here* by Herve Tullet. I loved how interactive the book was. I want to try to make more like it.
3. *The Boy, the Mole, the Fox and the Horse* by Charlie Mackesy. Every single page seems to cut to the core of humanity.

4. Llama Llama Red Pajama by Anna Dewdney. My 2 year old son loves it, so now I must love it too. The rhyme is on point and once you've heard Ludicris rap it, game over. So good.
5. Where the Sidewalk Ends by Shel Silverstein. Technically a book of poems, but I devoured this when I was a kid and strive to write poetry just as good.

**4. What writing and/or publishing-related accomplishment are you most proud of?**

I try to sit with the fact that I wrote and was able to publish an actual book, and then two more! It's a huge deal, but I think we rush to worry about how sales are going or when/if we'll sell another book. I'm just doing my best to be present as much as I can be.

I'm also proud of winning the 2018 Walter Grant from We Need Diverse Books. That win prompted me to try to work towards improving representation in publishing whenever and wherever possible. I am currently working on The Writing Barn's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee, as well as SCBWI Austin Chapter's Equity and Inclusion Committee.

**5. What about mentoring excites you most?**

I've been lucky enough to be surrounded by amazing writers and teachers. I think I've gained a lot of experience over the years because of that guidance, and I feel morally obligated to pass that knowledge on to others.

**6. What are your strengths as a mentor?**

I think I have a real knack for identifying the core element of a story and helping a writer expand on it. I think there is a positive element in every story. Sometimes it might be a little buried. I would like to help my mentee find that diamond in the rough and help it shine.

**7. What is your feedback/critique style like?**

Once I am assigned a mentee, I'll meet with them and discuss how they would like our working relationship to proceed. I am very tactful, but ultimately I want to help my mentee improve their story enough to get published. I present all the positives and then discuss areas of growth. The final decisions come down to my mentee though. It's their story, so I am just here to help in whatever way I can.

**8. What are the most important things you're seeking in a mentee?**

I am looking for someone who is open to guidance. This is my first time being a writing mentor, so I'm not exactly sure how this will all go. I do know that I genuinely want to help whomever I get teamed up with and would like my mentee to be good at communicating their questions and areas where they need guidance. I would also like to work with a POC author. I've made a commitment to representation in the publishing world, and would really like to share my expertise with that demographic.

**9. Who are you not the best mentor for?**

I guess someone who thinks they know everything already and is just looking for me to pass their work on to my agent. I don't have the clout to pass anything along yet, so it's a moot point. :)

**10. How will you help your mentee and their stories develop?**

I feel like I can help in a variety of ways. I'll critique manuscripts, identify weaknesses and strengths and help to develop their strongest ideas. I am pretty good at critiquing query letters. I have some tips for social media and a lot of tips on self-promotion. I'm always hustling to try to get my books out into the world. I'm not great at identifying good agents and/or publishing houses, but I'll do my best to guide you in the right direction.

**11. What is your style of communication like?**

I communicate through email as well as texting (i.e. sending me a text to tell me that you sent me an email so I don't miss it.) I would also like to set up at least one zoom conference at the beginning of the mentorship program to discuss communication styles, wants, and needs. We can also discuss frequency of emails and zoom meetings at that point.

**12. What are you looking for in the applications you receive?**

Passion. I still consider myself a newbie at this whole writing game. I've had two, about to be three, books come out during a pandemic. There have been a lot of things I've missed because of that, but I think the pandemic gave me an opportunity to grow in self promotion and my online presence. Most of that growth came from a passion for what I am doing and the knowledge that if I was going to succeed, especially during these times, I was going to have to hustle. I would like a mentee that has that same passion. A passion for truly wanting to improve and become successful in this industry.

**13. What kind of mentorship experience do you envision for you and your mentee?**

I would love for them to get published, dedicate the book to me, sell the manuscript for a movie adaption, and then buy me a writing cabin in the mountains with the millions they make. I would also settle for a friendship where we support each other's works.

**14. Any tips/advice for applicants to make their applications and/or manuscripts shine?**

Just be yourself. The more honest you are the better we'll match in the future. I tend towards humor, so if you're funny let that shine too.

**15. What advice or inspiring and/or motivational words would you like to offer up to anyone applying to be your mentee or simply reading this questionnaire?**

No matter what the future holds, know this: YOU ARE A WRITER! You are actively writing and pursuing your dreams. You are working towards the goal of getting published. The publishing industry is extremely subjective, so who knows if you'll have that mixture of skill and luck. So just enjoy the ride! Most people never even try to fulfill a dream. You are on that journey, so be proud of yourself! I hope that was inspirational enough.